



SHIP OF TEARS



An Earthdawn Web Shard
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Ship of Tears**

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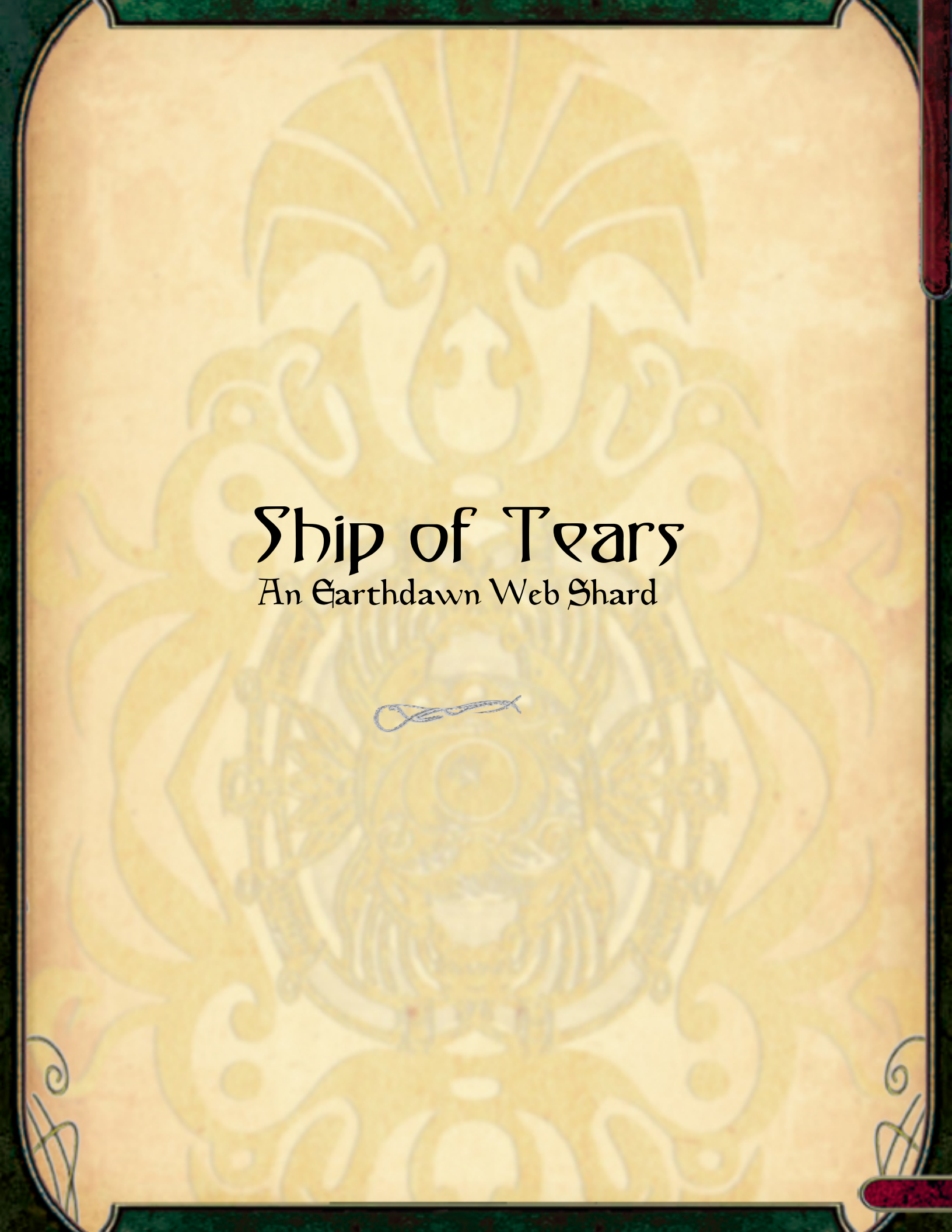
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Ship of Tears

An Earthdawn Web Shard

Handwritten signature or mark in blue ink.

*I can spill the blood myself quite well, thank you. But it is just more efficient
- and elegant - if I can have others do it for me, wouldn't you say so? -
Talann, an assassin of the Keys of Death*

While traveling through Barsaive, the group encounters an adept seeking their help to dismantle a slave ring. The adept provides them with information about an inn where travelers are abducted, and information on the Theran slave ship that transports the abductees.

The adept is in fact a member of the Keys of Death (**Secret Societies of Barsaive, p. 93-99**), who has a grudge against the ship's crew. He views the group as helpful pawns to tie up some of his loose ends. The intelligence provided to the players is good, but the assassin is not planning on letting anyone but him walk out of this event alive.

Optionally, a shortened version of this adventure would eliminate the entire assassin angle, and just have the group stumble upon the slave rings themselves.

Event 1: Prophecy

Since at the end of this adventure, the adventurers may be tricked into consuming a very deadly poison, a charitable Gamemaster may want to throw a helpful prophecy their way. Illusionist 6th circle spell Foreseeing seems quite useful here, and the prophecy reads as follows:

*The one who desires bloodshed,
Masked, his nature not as it appears,*

*Gamble and trust his lies thread,
To save lives and hear Lochost cheers.
But beware of his gifted bread,
Crimson it will bring the tears.*

While the prophecy is not necessary, without it, the players may find it much more difficult to save those that they rescue, and even themselves.

Event 2: Request for Heroic Assistance

At some point during their travels in Barsaive, in a location of Gamemasters choice (for example, in a region between Hanto and Bartertown), the group should be met by a weary traveler, asking for help. The traveler, is named Talann, who identifies himself a Circle 4 Illusionist, seeks the help of some adepts who would help him take down a ring of slavers he has found; he will tell them a story of how he was investigating a missing friend and stumbled upon something too big for him to handle - but something that the group of seasoned adventurers should be able to deal with.

Once the group agrees to listen to his

story, he will tell them of an inn named "Last Journey". On a surface it is no different from many inns in Barsaive, a large establishment with a palisade and several guards, catering to travelers in who want to stay in a civilized conditions in an otherwise poorly developed area. The proprietor of that inn, Named Biafra, is in fact a part-time slaver, who captures unwary travelers staying at his inn. He seeks those who would not be missed, and treats them to a sleeping drug in food or drink; than they are imprisoned in a nearby hidden slave pen. Every few weeks, the slaves are transferred to a Theran slave vedette.

Talann suggests that with the group help, they can not only free the slaves in the pen

and deal with the innkeeper, but also take down the vedette itself (this assumes a group of 4-6 characters approaching or above circle 4).

There is, however, more to the story than Talann tells the group. Talann is not even his real name (that would be Malann). Next, Talann is no mere Circle 4 illusionist, he is in fact a Circle 7 illusionist. He masks himself well, either with the Charm of Astral Deception (**Burning Desires, 3rd ed, p. 84**) or with the Disguise Astral Imprint spell (**Illusionary Spells, Tableau Infractus, p. 13**). Because he does not consider himself nor his plan perfect, he is also wearing a regular disguise, and sustains a Best Face spell on himself; if the players notice that, he will claim this is his illusionist way of life, a good habit in his line of work (investigation, he claims), and make a big deal of changing his face every day or so. Overall, the players may notice his real world disguise, but the astral one is much more difficult to crack

(and the players are not expected to do either).

True to the way of illusionists, the above veils are far from the only one Talann casts about himself. He is in fact an assassin from the Keys of Death, and he has been buying slaves from the innkeeper himself, later to execute them at his leisure. In the past few months, however, the Biarfa has been charging him more and more, claiming that the prices in the Theran market are going up. Talann is annoyed at that, and he feels that his arrangement with Biafra - and the innkeeper himself - have outlived their usefulness. What better way to tie up the loose ends, and aid his mission of resurrecting Death, than to spill the blood of everyone in the inn, the crew and slaves on the ship, and the pawns he will lead into battle? Oh, and capturing the ship, worth tens of thousands of silver pieces, is nothing to sneer at.

Event 3: The Slave Inn

Securing the inn can be made into a full blown combat, if the gamemaster thinks that the slaver would feel the need for serious muscle. Or can be as easy as roleplaying threatening/beating a few non-adept guards and the staff, if the slaver relies more on deception, and the gamemaster wishes for this scene to be over quickly. The slaves are kept in a cellar underneath the inn, with a tunnel leading quite a way to the outside, where, deeper into a nearby forest, there is a clearing used for the vedette to land.

The players have to secure the inn, free the prisoners, avoid trouble with the guests (some of whom can be adepts and would try to defend the inn if they thought it was being raided by bandits). Not all members of the staff may be aware of the slave ring operation; particularly the young hires may be quite innocent.

Talann will assist with whatever plan the characters come up, although he will be advocating "no mercy" or "swift and summary justice" where possible. He is too smart to come up as very bloodthirsty, of course. He will make convincing arguments when needed, and give up if the characters are not agreeing with him; after all, he still has his ace in the hole - and more than one of those, in fact. Note that while he has access to high circle spells, he will avoid using them openly, to avoid casting doubts on his persona.

Among the prisoners freed there is a shill - Talann young trainee, another illusionist or a thief adept of a low (1-3) circle. He will also call for no mercy, and whatever doubts the players may have about Talann, will they suspect the slaves they have just freed?

Event 4: The Ship of Deception

Interrogation of the inn staff should reveal that the Theran ship, a slave vedette "Outlandish Profit", is coming very soon. Passwords, location of fires (it comes in the night), signs with light quartz, and so on, should not be that difficult to obtain. The ship comes down, the players ambush the first party, and charge through the plank onto the ship itself...

The stats for a Theran transport vedette can be found in Gamemaster's Companion, 3rd ed, p. 72, but this adventure should not result in a ship to ship combat. I will see if I can find and scan the maps our group prepared of the ship (three decks, and the superstructure - modeled on an 18th century slave ship). I hope that RB releases some Earthdawn ship maps one day, but that's a different rant. The book suggests a crew of about 30, and description of air sailing elsewhere suggest most of the crew would be non-adept air sailors. Sample crew could be, for example:

Crew:

- * captain (human, 5th circle Air Sailor)
- * 5 officers and expert sailors (humans and elves, 2nd and 3rd circle Air Sailors)
- * 1 enforcer (troll, 4th circle Sky Raider)
- * 23 regular crewmembers (human and elves, non-adept Air Sailors)

Event 5: The Feast of Revelation

Talann plan is simple: poison everybody else who is left alive. Keys of Death have at their disposal what is likely the most potent poison in Earthdawn: Death's Tears. This is a deadly poison (**Secret Societies of Barsaive**, p. 98), with SD 12 and result of failure being death in under 12 minutes. Talann will volunteer to help out with the victory feast, in fact, his protégée, who might have stayed guarding the inn, could have a head start on preparing the meal.

This can be tweaked to the group power level, for example an Elemental is not uncommon abroad ships, I'd expect. Either way, the crew should be a challenge, but not insurmountable, to the group, which should be able to force their way on board, and capture the ship.

Talann, once again, will be assisting, and so may his young shill protégée (who may however volunteer to guard the inn). This combat is not the time for Talann to turn against the players - but that will happen soon afterwards.

This scene should end with characters in control of the ship, and having freed the slaves. The combat should be quick, and the ship should not be able to fly, but give the players some incentive to be quick (the sound of the drum from below the deck, deployment of oars as the combat nears its climax, and so on). The ship may have a ballista, the captain can put a dying curse on it, this should be a fun, if somewhat hack & slash heavy, scene (once the crew adepts are slain, the combat can be sped up as the non-adept crew tries to run away...). It should appear, on the surface that the victory is complete, and only some loose ends remain to be tied up. Unfortunately for the players, those loose ends include - for Talann - their characters themselves.

If Talann thinks that the characters are suspicious of him, he will delegate the final steps of poisoning to his protégée, and escape before the poisoned foodstuffs are served on his flying carpet. If discovered at any point, he will try to flee rather than risk death, and outclassing the characters by several levels, with escape-aiding spells always in his matrixes, and the ability to fly quickly, he should succeed in this, unless he is overwhelmed by a well-planned ambush. The

protégée himself will do his best to play an innocent victim who might at best have taken some advice from Talann about "an interesting spice" at his word.

Will the characters discover his plan before dozens of innocents - guest inns, adepts who might have fought beside them,

Loose Ends

Talann does not hold a particular grudge if the characters escape, and save the slaves, to him this all was business, nothing personal, and Keys interests would have been served well with dozens of deaths at the inn and at the ship - a task that he would be much more difficult, and dangerous, if he was to attempt it without the players help. Sure, he would love to see them bleeding to their deaths as well, but Death does not discriminate between the death of an adept and a death of a slave. He likes his low-hanging fruit just fine, and making an enemy of a skillful group of heroes have been a final mistake of many a villain.

This is not to say that a master of puppetry such as him would be above trying to finish the job if an opportunity arises... and if the characters hurt him, captured his robe, or killed his protégée, this could become personal indeed.

Character

Talaan

Elf illusionist Talaan (false name Malann), 7th circle, and member of the Keys of Death. Talaan is an atypical Key. Whereas most of his fellow Keys prefer to spill the blood themselves, he understands his discipline's limitations, and turns them into his strengths. He prefers to make others do the bloodletting for him; as he reckons, it works just as well, is safer, and to him, more satisfying than "brute work any scorcher can do". He prefers to work from behind the shadows, and use trickery and lies to see the

the slaves - die from the deadly poison? Are the characters well-stocked on Cleanse Poison and Kelia's Antidotes (note the errata for it - it stops the poison for 24h ONLY)? Will they prevent this great victory from being turned into a great tragedy?

Now, the characters could be motivated to chase this mass murdered themselves. This could lead to a larger adventure involving the Keys, as the characters try to find out more about the assassin using such a deadly poison, likely not knowing his real Name, face or astral aura...

Oh, and let's not forget about the ship, likely worth several dozen thousands of silver pieces. If the gamemaster thinks this is too much for the group, the ship can be damaged during combat (perhaps taking off, then falling and taking significant structural damage). Trying to sell it may take some thinking, could lead to acquiring some valuable contacts, and what if the ship was to be stolen? Then, perhaps, the group always wanted a ship of their own... they just need a crew. And there is the tiny problem of the slave ship of Theran design (with oars)...

havoc being wrought. If forced to fight, he will avoid fights to death, preferring to flee and fight another day - or preferably, to orchestrate the events so that those who tried to kill him will die, without him having to risk his life against presumably dangerous opponents.

Among his most precious belongings is the flying carpet, an item that carries him faster than his own wings, does not tire and allows him to concentrate on his spellcasting, his Ring of Protection, and the Death Robe. The carpet and the robe are almost always within

his hands reach, although the robe is well hidden, as it is too distinctive to be worn openly – and even a skilled illusionist will not trick everyone in a large crowd. As such, Talaan wears his Robe only occasionally, when he feels safe or, when he knows he needs all the resources he has to survive.

Attributes

DEX: 9 (4) STR: 8 (4) TOU: 11 (5)
PER: 16 (7) WIL: 16 (7) CHA: 16 (7)

Characteristics

Initiative: 5 **Physical Defense:** 9
Karma: 42 **Spell Defense:** 11
Actions: **Social Defense:** 9
Attacks: **Physical Armor:** 7
Death: 66* **Mystic Armor:** 4
Unconsciousness: 51* **Recovery Tests:** 2
Wound Threshold: 8 **Knockdown:** 3
* Adjusted for blood **Movement Rate:** 3/8
Oaths & Blood Charms **Legend Award:**

Talents

Karma ritual 7
R/W magic (D) 7/14
Speak language (D) 7/14
Thread Weaving (D) 7/14
Spellcasting (D) 7/14
Disguise Self (D, req. Karma) 7/14
Durability (4/3) x 7
Dead Dall (D) 7/14
False Sight (D) 7 [for 1 strain, +7 to disbelief]
Frighten 7/14
True Sight 7 (D)
Engaging Banter (D) 7/14
Willforce 7/14
Fast Hand 7/12
Spell Matrix: 3
Enhanced Matrix: 2

Special Abilities

Can spend karma on Perception, Willpower and Effect Tests

Spells

Image, Fun With Doors, Light, Rope Guide, Unseen Voices, 2: Ephemeral Bolt, Innocent Activity, Send Message, Tailor, You Got Me, 3: Blinding Glare, Mind Fog, Nobody Here, Phantom Warrior, 4: Bleeding Edge, Clarion Call, Conceal Tracks, Improved Alarm, Memory Blank, 5: Enter and Exit, Flying Carpet, Switch 6: Dancing Disks, Illusory Missiles. 7: Disguise Astral Imprint (**Illusionary Spells, p.13**), Cloak (**Illusionary Spells, p.13**), Time Flies, Walk Through

Spells in Matrices

Matrix 1: Cloak
Matrix 2: Illusory missiles
Matrix 3: Stop Right There
Enhanced Matrix 1: Displace Image
Enhanced Matrix 2: Phantom Warrior

Skills

Knowledge: Alchemy and Potions 5/12
Knowledge: Magical Lore and Theory 5/12
Knowledge: Poison 5/12
Knowledge: Keys of Death 5/12th
General: Streetwise 5/12
General: Thrown Weapons 2/7
General: Melee Weapons 2/7
General: Unarmed Combat 2/7
General: Hiding 5/10
General: Silent Walk 5/10
Speak Language Dwarven
Speak Language Elven
Speak Language Windling
Read / Write Dwarven
Read / Write Elven
Read / Write Windling

Equipment

Thread Items:
Ring of Protection (Defensive Item, **Players Guide, p.277**): 4 out of 4 ranks, = +4 Spell Defense, +1 Steel Thought talent
Death Robe (hard to disguise, see **Secret Societies of Barsaive, p.98**):
Rank 1: physical defense +2
Rank 2: Spellcasting +3
Rank 3: Willforce: +3
Rank 4: unused
Rank 5: unused
Forged, Thread Padded Leather Armor with 4 ranks, (based on armor in **Player's Guide p.278**) so, base 4 armor, +1 forged armor bonus, +2 thread armor bonus and +2 mystic armor bonus

Blood Charm: Charm of Astral Deception (**Burning Desires, p. 84**)
Blood Charm: Absorb Blow

Windling spear, unforged (damage step 5)
Dagger (ds 2)

Flask of poison: Poison: Death's Tears. Step: 12 (defend vs toughness). Onset: D12 minutes, duration: D6 minutes, effect: Death (**Secret Societies of Barsaive, p. 98**)
Potion: Last Chance Salve
Potion: Healing Potion x2
Potion: Booster Potion x2,
Potion: Kelia's Antidote,
Potion: Cleanse Poison x3

Note 1: Disguise Astral Imprint last for rank (7) hours, Sensing Difficulty 23, Disbelief 12 (or 19 with False Sight). It disguises him as Circle 4 illusionist, also obscures his threatened items.

Note 2: Flying Carpet (**Players Guide, p.171**) has a movement rate of 9, PD = Talann's, SD 7 and DR 30.

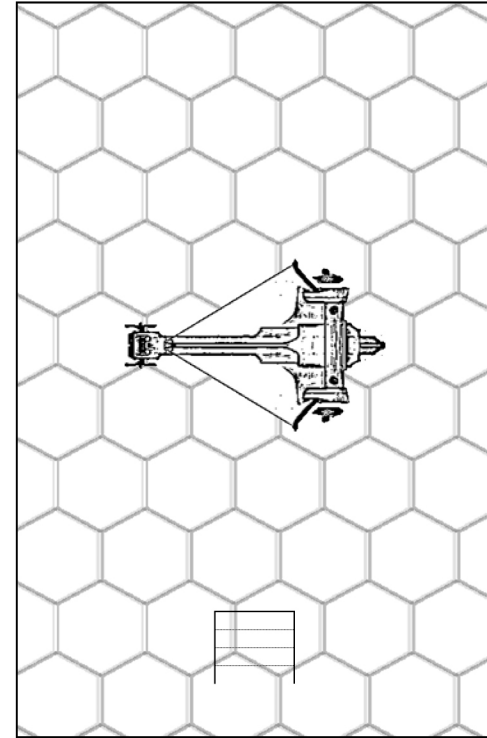
This is a rough ship design to use with the Ship of Tears web shard.

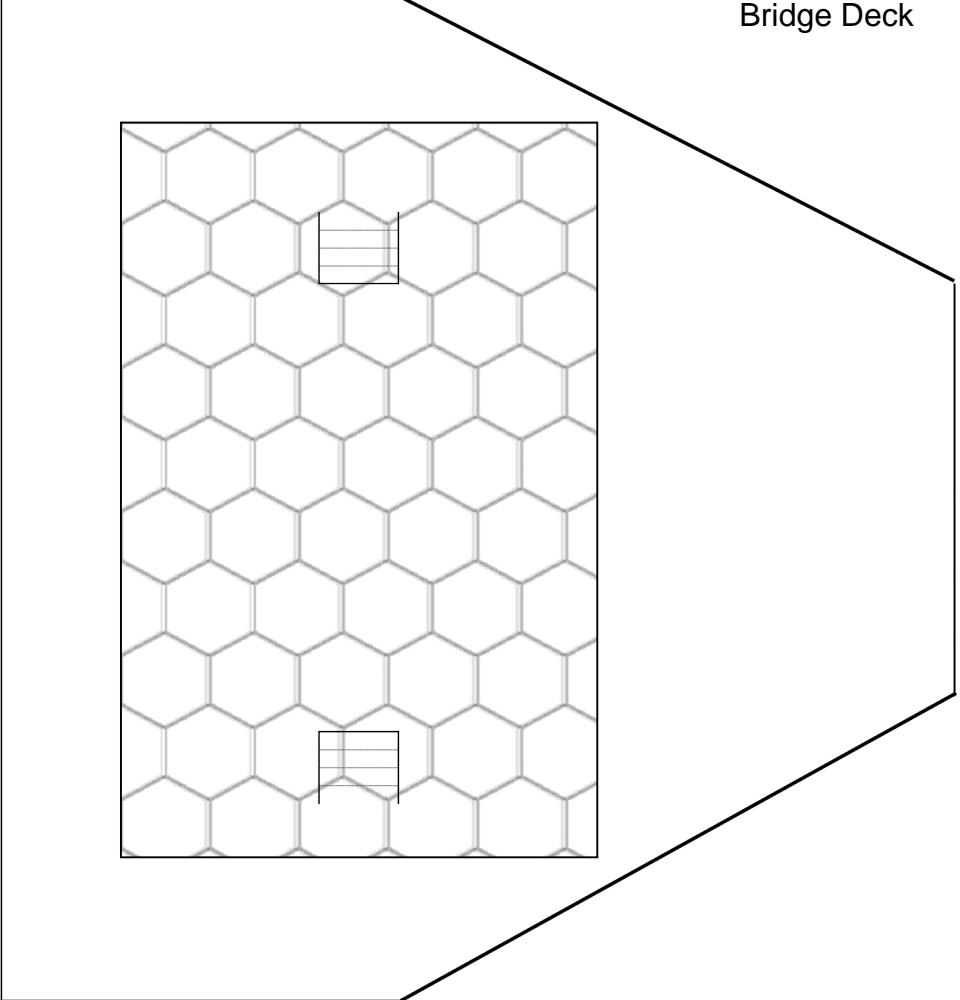
Each hex is 1 inch if you are using miniatures.

This map can be scaled to print to size though doing so would use quite a lot of paper and ink.

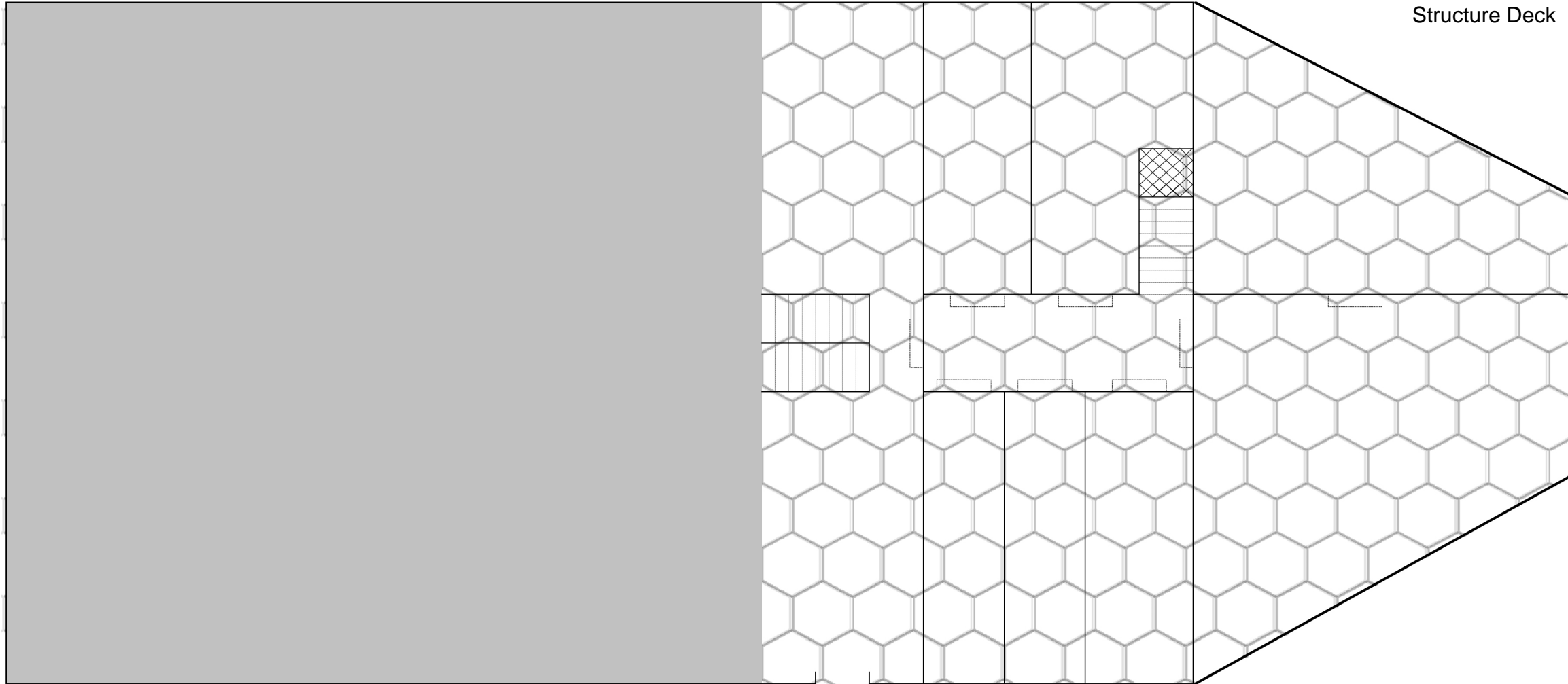
The ship's decks are viewed from the top down beginning with the Ballista Deck.

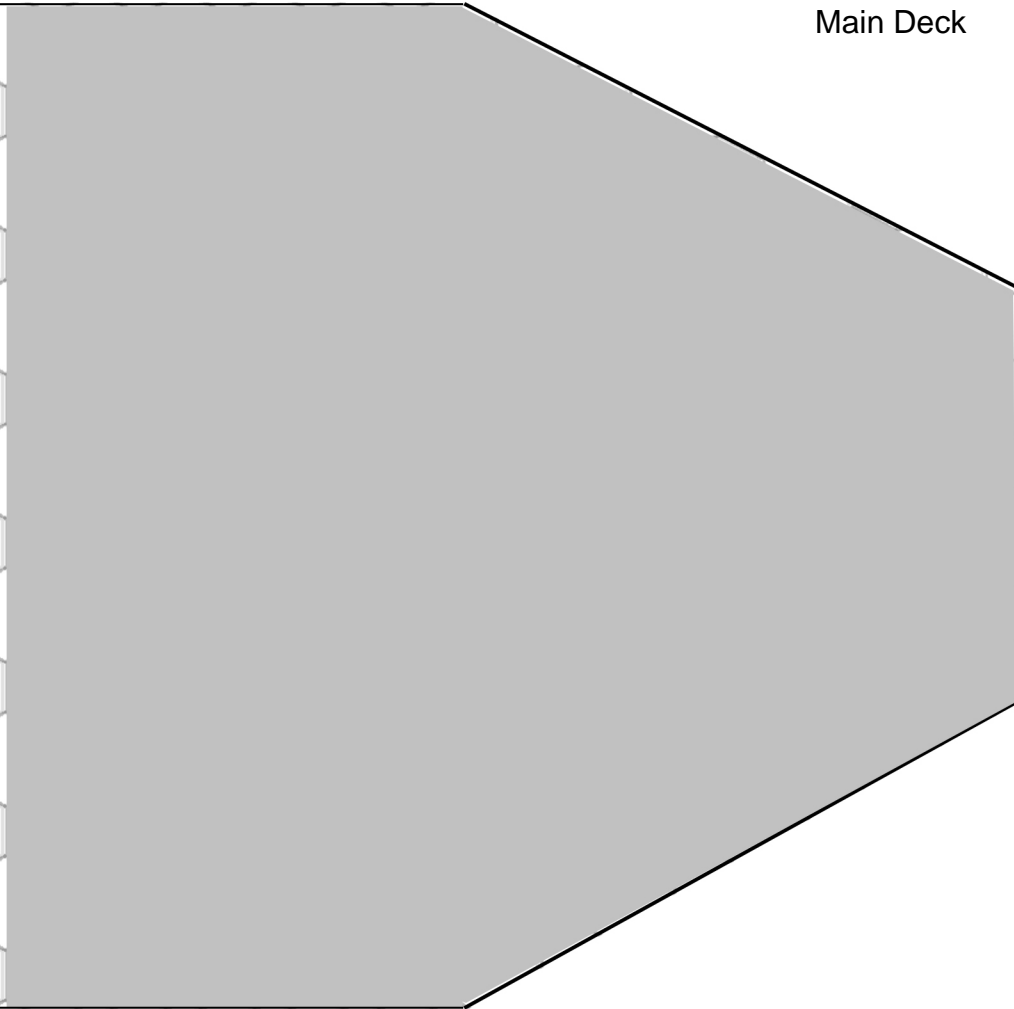
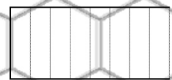
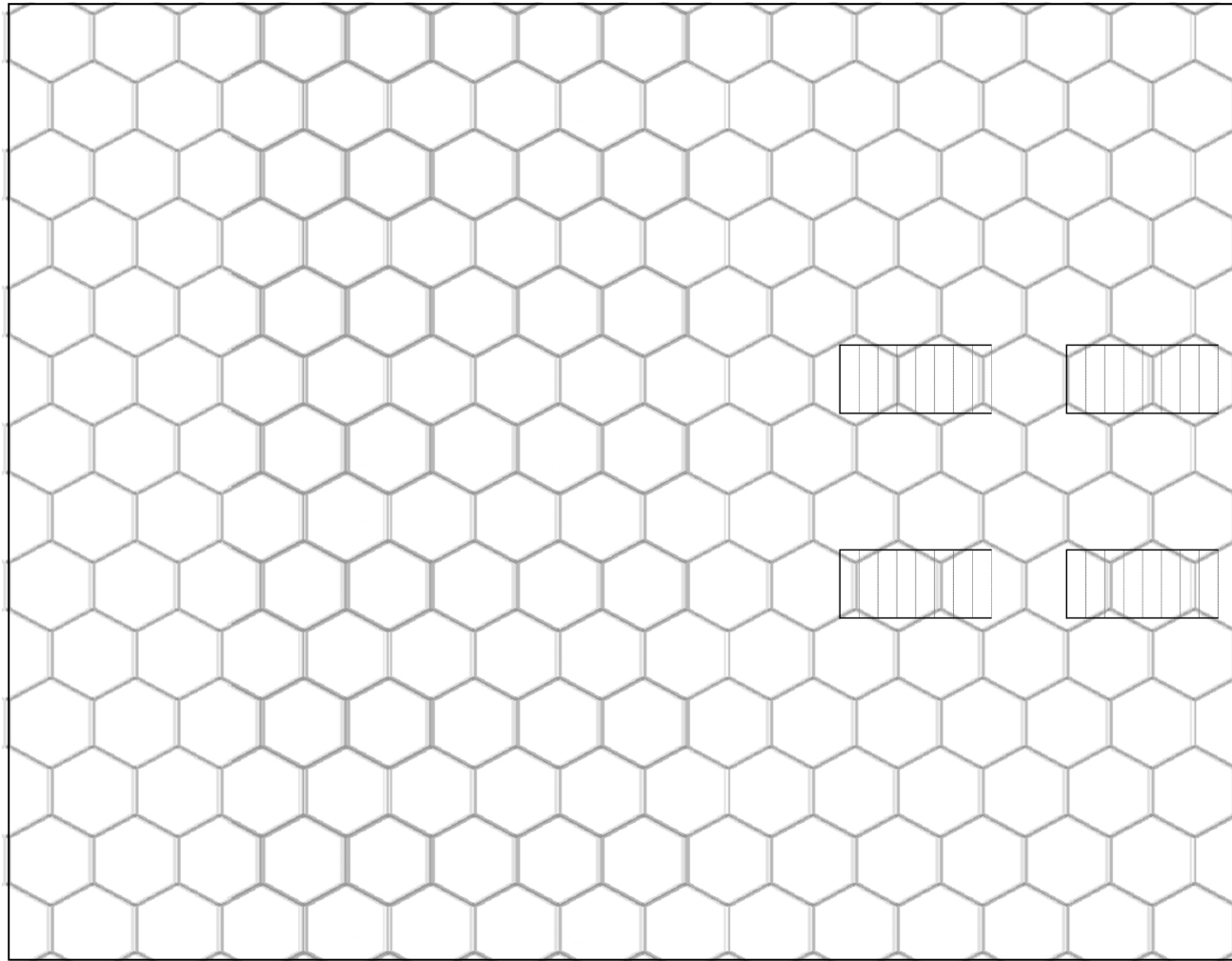
Minimal detail is provided to allow for you to customize each deck to your personal specifications.





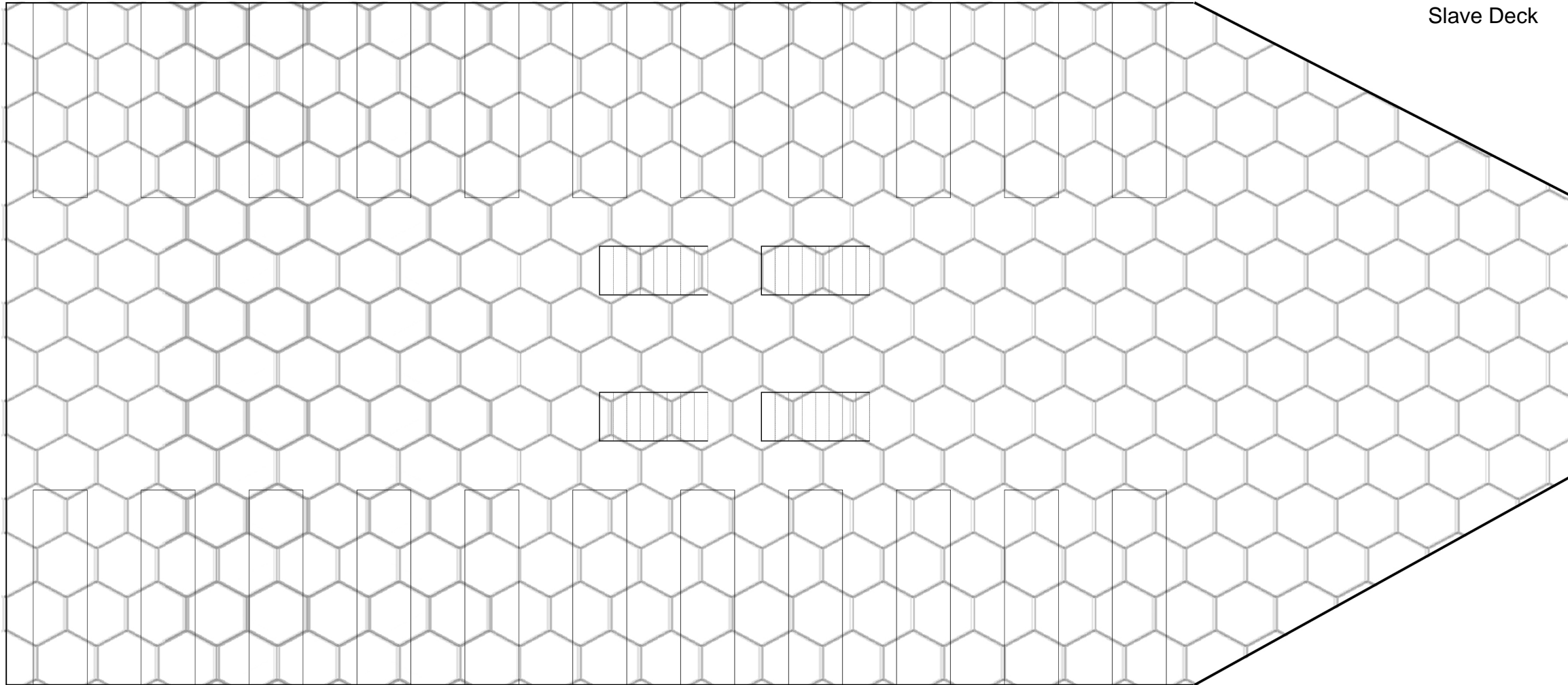
Bridge Deck

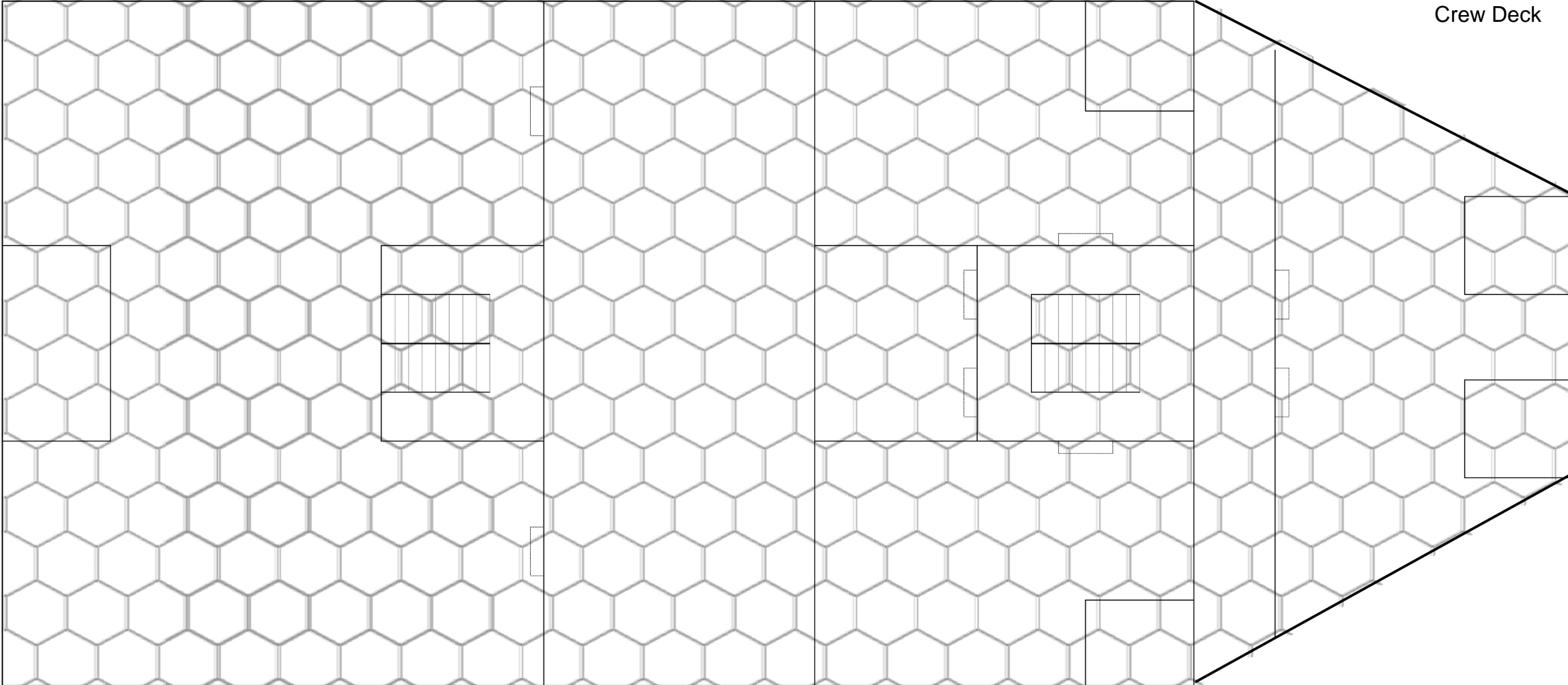




Main Deck

Slave Deck





Crew Deck